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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000206

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/16/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENGR](#) [SNAR](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: FM MADURO BLAMES USG FOR OIL DISPUTE, TERRORISM

REF: A. CARACAS 000168  
[1](#)B. CARACAS 000182

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT RICHARD DOWNES,  
REASON 1.4 (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro insisted to local media February 13 that the USG is behind ExxonMobil's dispute with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV). He also reiterated long-standing BRV accusations that the USG is working with the opposition and local media to destabilize the Hugo Chavez government. The next day, Maduro accused President Bush and U.S. Representative Ros-Lehtinen of being terrorists. Maduro also attributed two recent small detonations in Caracas (for which a pro-government organization claimed responsibility) to the United States. Maduro's statements reflect his visceral anti-Americanism. He is also one of many senior BRV officials, as reflected in the BRV's media outlets, trying to shift the blame for all of Venezuela's domestic problems onto the United States. End Summary.

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Maduro Blames USG For ExxonMobil Dispute  
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[1](#)2. (U) Taking issue with a statement by the State Department spokesman, Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro told the media February 13 that the ongoing legal dispute between ExxonMobil (XM) and Venezuela (Ref A) is not "commercial, but rather political." Maduro defined the issue as one between "President Chavez, who has recovered oil wealth for Venezuelans and our continental sovereignty, and the United States government and its internal (read, local) lackeys, who prepared laws during the 1980's and 1990's to put their hands on the largest energy reserves that exist on the planet." Maduro also asserted that the USG is "nothing but the direct representation of the oligarchy and transnational bourgeoisie; it is the multinationals' state, which simply operates through political power, in this case, the State Department."

[1](#)3. (U) The Venezuelan foreign minister also accused the media and opposition politicians of exploiting ExxonMobil's judicial efforts to freeze Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA's assets to try to "destabilize" the Venezuelan government. He said unspecified "small-time" political personalities want to return to power in order to get their hands directly on Venezuelan oil. He argued that rather than

seek compensation, ExxonMobil should pay compensation to the people of Venezuela, the southern hemisphere, and other poor people for "plundering over the course of a century." Maduro said the BRV is engaging other countries in a "global effort" to defend the sovereign interests of Venezuela.

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Maduro Blasts U.S. Member of Congress  
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¶4. (U) Asked about local media reporting regarding U.S. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen's concerns about Venezuelan ties to terrorism, Foreign Minister Maduro told reporters February 14 that Ros-Lehtinen is "linked to Cuban-American mafia terrorist groups." He accused the congresswoman of protecting Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch and added that the first person that should be placed on a terrorism list is President Bush. Maduro also asserted that the USG is engaged in a destabilization plan in Venezuela and accused the USG of being responsible for the detonation of small explosives in front of a statue of George Washington and the Papal Nuncio in Caracas (Ref B). A radical pro-government organization left leaflets at both sites.

¶5. (U) Maduro also defended the BRV's counternarcotics efforts. He said "Venezuela is one of the world's leaders in drug seizures." Maduro noted that thousands of tons of illicit drugs enter the United States despite the USG's "money, power, and technology." He told the media that the USG is spending resources in Iraq and building a fence along the Mexican border "instead of combating drug distribution and trafficking."

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Comment  
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¶6. (C) Foreign Minister Maduro's most recent outbursts against the United States are representative of his consistently shrill, anti-American public rhetoric. Maduro is just one of many BRV officials seeking to exploit ExxonMobil's commercial dispute with Venezuela to try to rally flagging public support for President Chavez. National Assembly President Cilia Flores even accused staunch Chavista legislator Luis Tascon of being a pawn of the United State after he made charges of corruption against the current tax authority (SENIAT) director. Given rising public concern over crime, inflation, and rolling shortages of basic foodstuff, BRV officials appear predisposed to be even more vitriolic than usual, if only to distract public attention from pressing national problems. The BRV's latest rhetoric is likely testing the credibility of even loyal Chavez supporters.

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